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# THE STRUCTURE OF WILDLIFE ADMINISTRATION IN CANADA

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Paper presented at the Northeast Wildlife Conference, January 7, 1958, by Dr. V.E.F. Solman, Assistant Chief, Canadian Wildlife Service.

The structure of wildlife administration in Canada varies in many particulars throughout the federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions, because of the varying state of development of renewable resource use and differing public attitudes toward these resources.

In all these areas, however, the same general structure prevails. The administration of the wildlife resource is generally the responsibility of one branch (among several) of one government department. The political head of the department, the Minister, is an elected member of the government in office at the time. In almost all cases the remaining positions, including that of the Deputy Minister (or equivalent), are permanent civil service career positions. This arrangement ensures continuity of the staff and of the work of the department, regardless of changes in government.

The Director of the wildlife division (known under other titles in some cases) reports to the Deputy Minister and supervises the work of the biologists, conservation officers, law enforcement officers, supporting clerical staff, and all other personnel concerned in the work of wildlife administration. Frequently the conservation and law enforcement officers serve the same function for two or more divisions in the department (e.g. wildlife, forestry, and fisheries).

Commonly the department in which the wildlife agency is located is called "Mines and Resources" or "Lands and Forests" or something similar. Two provinces have departments called respectively "Recreation and Conservation" and "Fish and Game" and have assigned the wildlife administrative units to those departments.

In the public mind there is often confusion between the concept of conservation as it applies to renewable resources and as it applies to non-renewable resources. Inclusion of a wildlife administrative agency in a department which deals with both renewable and non-renewable resources may work to the detriment of full understanding and use of wildlife populations because of their dynamic nature. The non-renewable resources frequently have a higher present monetary value and their administration may therefore receive greater attention than the renewable resources -- including wildlife -- though a long-term view might well suggest a different emphasis.

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The recent change in British Columbia, whereby wildlife administration is included in a department that deals with recreation and conservation, is, I believe, a worth-while improvement and should ensure greater public understanding of the place of wildlife in modern recreation programs. The emphasis on recreation is proper in modern wildlife use, particularly in view of the expanding human population, increasing leisure time, and the constantly reduced area which can be used for wildlife production. The recreational aspect may be expected to receive heavier stress in future, while the food and other values of wildlife will tend to lessen in importance.

Within a provincial wildlife agency activities are carried on under the authority of an Act or Acts passed by the provincial parliament. Because of the need for flexible control of wildlife resources, some provincial wildlife agencies now have the power to change seasons, bag limits and related matters by regulation, without the necessity of waiting for a session of the legislature to amend the appropriate Act. This increased flexibility, which is by no means universal as yet, permits the proper use of management areas and the harvest of species in line with current availability. Those provinces that do not yet have this degree of flexibility are progressing toward it.

Some wildlife resources in all provinces are administered under federal legislation, the provincial game officers in such cases assisting federal officials in enforcement by being named ex-officio officers under the appropriate federal Acts. The federal Migratory Birds Convention Act and the Game Export Act are thus of importance in provincial wildlife administration.

In addition to the regulation of public hunting, and of the wildlife species on which it depends, most provinces administer programs under which registered traplines are reserved for the use of individuals or groups. This has removed many of the difficulties of the old "catch as catch can" trapping methods, has ensured more adequate utilization of fur resources on Crown lands, and has helped to stabilize the income of trappers and the availability of wild pelts for the fur industry to the benefit of both.

In at least one province (Manitoba) a somewhat different development has been accomplished in limited areas. In those areas costly habitat improvement structures have been paid for from public funds. The improvement has resulted in increased production of fur animals, chiefly muskrats, which are then the basis of short-term trapping opportunities for large numbers of individual trappers. The whole project is managed by the provincial government, the furs are sold as a part of the program and payment is made to the trapper as a series of monthly payments to augment income earned from other employment through the year.



Two provinces, Saskatchewan and Quebec, have set up provincial fur marketing facilities as a service to trappers. The Indian Affairs Branch of the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration works co-operatively with several provinces in fur management and marketing programs for the benefit of Indian trappers. Formal agreements for this work are in effect with three provinces and informal liaison extends co-operative action to several others.

The federal wildlife agency operates much as do the provincial agencies, under the authority of Acts of Parliament, and also serves to co-ordinate parallel activities of groups of provinces and as a clearing agency for wildlife information. It deals with migratory bird research throughout Canada, generally in co-operation with provincial biological staffs. It reports through a civil servant Deputy Minister to an elected political head, a Minister who is a member of the government in office.

Other federal agencies, in addition to the Wildlife Service, conduct some research on or give administrative consideration to wildlife. In the Department of Agriculture, at least three divisions encounter problems pertaining to wildlife. Science Service carries on research on mammals in relation to the biological control of certain forest insects. The Experimental Farms Service is concerned with damage to and interruption of its plant breeding program by migratory birds. The Veterinary Director General's division, responsible for control of rabies in domestic animals, is concerned with the wild mammals that may be involved in transmission of the disease.

The Department of National Health and Welfare, through its concern with Rocky Mountain spotted fever, hydatid disease, trichinosis, rabies and other hazards to public health which are intimately bound up with wild mammals, becomes interested in the ecology of those mammals.

The Forestry Branch of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources must concern itself with those mammals which damage trees and tree regeneration under both experimental and production conditions.

The Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration takes a very active interest in research on and management of fur-bearers and big game as those resources relate to Indian welfare.

In these and other similar cases the administrative concern of the federal agencies is translated into detailed research and administrative action by the Wildlife Service in areas under federal supervision, and by the appropriate provincial and territorial agencies within the respective areas of responsibility.



The Northwest and Yukon Territories function somewhat like the provinces but depend upon the Federal Government for a part of their staff. The government of those Territories is by Councils, all or part of which are elected. The senior Territorial officer, the Commissioner, appoints a Director of Game in the Yukon Territory, while his counterpart in the Northwest Territories relies on the staff of the federal Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources to carry out territorial game administration. In both Territories, and in all areas under federal jurisdiction, wildlife research is carried out by the federal wildlife agency -- the Canadian Wildlife Service.

The research programs of the provincial game agencies are undertaken by qualified biologists who are career civil servants, as in the federal and territorial areas. Most provincial agencies have staffs of conservation officers who perform a wide variety of field duties. In the provinces with larger staffs much of the training of those officers is carried out at training establishments set up for the purpose. For example, the Ontario training establishment at Dorset is widely known and highly regarded in this field. Some jurisdictions still rely partly on appointed conservation officers who may not be civil servants, but the number of such officers is declining as public understanding of the requirements for effective wildlife management increases.

Provincial law enforcement is usually carried on by provincial conservation officers. Enforcement of federal wildlife laws is a responsibility of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who are assisted by honorary officers appointed under the Migratory Birds Convention Act and by provincial officers who hold ex-officio powers under that Act.

Provincial wildlife biologists engaged in fundamental or applied wildlife research or in the development of management programs are based at central locations, at regional offices scattered throughout the area being served, or at both. They work in co-operation with provincial officers responsible for research on and management of other renewable resources, who are usually members of the same government department. In some provinces, where forestry work has had a much longer history than research and management of wildlife, the forestry agency is more completely organized on a district basis. The wildlife districts are usually arranged to correspond with the forest districts for ease of administration. In at least one province, the senior officer in each district and region is the district or regional forester, who supervises the work of all district staff. The name "forester" attached to the senior positions is now an indicator of rank rather than scientific discipline, because some officers performing the duties of district foresters are biologists.



Some provincial wildlife agencies engage in co-operative planning of resource management by participation in the activities of inter-agency and joint private-governmental committees. As an example, the Alberta Game Branch is active in the deliberations of a water stabilization committee, a soil survey committee, and a soil and water conservation committee, and in addition receives advice from interested public groups through the work of an Advisory Committee on Fish and Game.

Some wildlife problems are investigated by university staff members under contractual arrangements with provincial or federal wildlife agencies. So far there are no co-operative wildlife research units in Canada similar to those in operation in the United States, and there are no specially earmarked federal funds for use in formal co-operative wildlife research programs like the Pittman-Robertson program. Federal-provincial wildlife research on an informal basis is increasing each year, and we look forward to the day when co-operative work, similar to that now authorized by federal Act in the fields of forestry, agriculture and water resources, will aid federal and provincial wildlife administrative agencies in their continuing and expanding quest for more facts upon which to strengthen the administrative structure and action.

The federal wildlife agency issues no hunting or trapping licences and thus collects no revenue from those sources. Provincial and territorial wildlife administrative units, however, do license hunters of one or several categories and most of them collect royalties on wild furs.

Revenue from those sources, in all cases, is deposited in consolidated funds, and is not earmarked for special purposes.

Federal, territorial and provincial funds for wildlife research and administration are furnished, by parliamentary authority, as part of the general appropriation for the responsible agency. The legislators who approve such expenditures are aware of the revenues derived from the exploitation of wildlife resources, but do not necessarily appropriate funds in any fixed relation to those revenues.

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